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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002511

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TAGS: PGOV PINS I2

SUBJECT: MUTHANNA SECURITY FORCES CLAIM MOI IMPAIRS FIGHT
AGAINST JAM

Classified By: PRT Muthanna Team Leader Phil Egger for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Muthanna cable.

Summary

¶2. (S) At a conference on 23 July with LTC Ellwood, Australian Commanding Officer for Muthanna, senior leaders of Muthanna's security forces said that the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) in Baghdad was using de-Ba'athification laws to reassign and remove their officers who had been most aggressive in fighting Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM). The leaders also claimed that logistical support from the MOI and Ministry of Defense (MOD) had been inadequate. LTC Ellwood (strictly protect) noted the weapons and ammunition that his forces had supplied to the Muthanna government during fighting in early July (reftel) but said future supplies would need to be given by the MOI and MOD; he promised to raise these issues on their behalf during his trip to Baghdad next week. End summary.

MOI Trying To Remove Anti-Militia Officers with De-Ba'ath Law

¶3. (S) On 23 July, LTC Ellwood and a Muthanna IPAO attended a security conference with a veritable who's who of Muthanna security officials, including Governor Hassani, Chief of Police Brigadier Kathoum, Chief of Military Intelligence COL Hwaydi, and senior representatives the 2nd/10th Iraqi Army Brigade, the traffic police, border police, emergency services, Criminal Investigative Unit (CIU), and Provincial Joint Operations Center (PJOC). The Governor and Brig. Kathoum focused on recent attempts by the MOI to remove or disempower some of the best officers under the pretext of their past association with the Ba'ath party and alleged crimes linked to that status. Because it was necessary for security officials under the former regime to have ties to the party in order to advance, many of the most experienced and qualified officers - who are now fighting JAM in Samawah and throughout the province - remain susceptible to these charges. Governor Hassani said his most ardent opponents of JAM are being targeted by JAM sympathizers within the MOI in Baghdad. The Governor and Brigadier believe these actions benefit the militias in two ways: first, their opponents are eliminated, and second the newly vacant jobs can be doled out as militia patronage. In but one example: COL Ali of the CIU has a strong relationship with Australian forces and the PRT, and he has been one of the most aggressive officers in countering JAM; MOI is trying to replace him. The security leaders were united in their desire that Muthanna "not become like Basra, where security forces are loyal to parties instead of the government," and they feared this pressure from the MOI was a step in that direction.

Shortages of Materiel Due To Inaction in Baghdad

¶4. (S) Much of the meeting was devoted to laundry lists of weapons and ammunition that the various services had requested but not received from Baghdad. Governor Hassani noted that he had an entire battalion without any equipment; it would be unable to assist other forces if called upon. He complained that, "even after one year of being PIC, we still cannot stand on our own," referring to the ongoing shortages for government operations in fuel and materiel, especially for the police in Samawah. LTC Ellwood promised to investigate these requests on their behalf during his visits to the MOD and MOI in Baghdad on July 28 and 30, respectively. Brigadier Kathoum asked LTC Ellwood not to mention their names as the sources of his inquiries in Baghdad; he promised discretion. It is possible that responsibility lies with Muthanna leaders for not having submitted the requests correctly; LTC Ellwood's inquiries in Baghdad should make it possible to identify the party at fault.

Guns and Ammunition, Please

¶5. (S) Police and Army leaders were unified in stressing the need for greater reserves of ammunition. The chief of police said that there was a new terror group operating in Samawah, called, "Jund Maket," which he said was funded by Saudis. In order to counter this new threat, as well as the larger and better organized JAM, Brig. Kathoum had requested from the MOI 5,000 AK-47 rifles. He allowed that he had already

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received 200,000 AK-47 rounds, but insisted that he still needed 300,000 more. He also sought 400 PKC machine guns, with 300,000 rounds. 100 RPG launchers, with 2,000 RPGs, 20 armored Humvees, 50 regular vehicles, and 10,000 body armor kits completed the wish list. Similarly, Brig. Kathoum said he received 100,000 liters of fuel per month, but required 280,000. The border police made similarly expansive requests of the central government. (Comment: the police request for half a million rounds is somewhat odd given that the entire population of Muthanna is not much greater, and that the bullets have a local black market value of about 25 cents. End comment.) Police officials have gathered a database of militia members and intend to create a Samawah id-card program, so they will be better prepared to identify militia members from other provinces if the clashes of early June recur.

Comment

¶6. (C) The leaders of Muthanna's security forces are steadfast in their opposition to militias and they work with Australian forces as closely as is possible in a PIC province. If their allegations are true, MOI meddling with the personnel in Muthanna would have the dangerous effect of removing the best commanders and could undo the substantial progress that has been made. End comment.
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